

Evaluation Plan for Performance Based Interviewing Program

Background.

In the past, the Veterans Health Administration has mandated a large-scale organizational change and conducted a nation-wide training session. For the Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) Program, a different model was used. A satellite broadcast with Dr. Garthwaite, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, and field managers who have been successfully using PBI gave an overview of PBI and described its benefits. VISN Directors were then asked if they would be interested in participating in a pilot or test of the program in their VISN. Five VISNs and VHA headquarters volunteered to participate. Each facility within the volunteer VISNs sent two employees to a train-the-trainer seminar. Generally, the two participants were a human resources management specialist and either a manager who was hiring employees or an education specialist. The training participants returned to the facilities and conducted training sessions. In addition, PowerPoint slides and a web site with sample questions was developed to assist managers. The PBI program will be rolled-out to the rest of VHA the next fiscal year.

Evaluation Models.

There were two purposes for evaluating and conducting training at test sites before rolling out the program Administration-wide. First, a formative evaluation or an evaluability assessment could be conducted to determine how the program could be improved to better meet the needs of managers in the field. Second, a summative evaluation could be conducted to evaluate the impact of the program on the test sites. Based on the impact on the test sites, projections could be made about the impact of the program if it were rolled out to the entire Veterans Health Administration. Information about program impact could also be used as an effective marketing tool to convince managers of the value of conducting performance based interviews. However, if the program were poorly implemented, attended by the wrong people or not applied on the job then the program will not have an impact.

Kirkpatrick (1994) has developed a model for evaluating training programs, which defines four levels of criteria for evaluation: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. His model is additive; that is; data should be collected at the lowest level to determine if the program has been successful before moving to the next highest level sequentially. This model is described below.

Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model

Level 1: Reaction. Evaluating reaction means measuring customer satisfaction with programs and interest in future programs. This is usually designed to assess the participant's feelings and attitudes regarding the training.

Level 2: Learning. Learning is the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending the program. At a minimum, participants who complete or are exposed to a training activity should learn something.

Level 3: Behavior. Behavior is defined as the extent to which a measurable change in behavior occurs on the job because the participant attended the training program.

Level 4: Results. The final results are a result of the participants attending training. Other authors have referred to level four as return on investment for the organization or bottom line organizational impact.

Reaction.

Most often this takes the form of a questionnaire or participant feedback form that is collected at the end of training. Other methods of data collection could include focus groups or follow-up questionnaires or telephone contacts. Data were collected from the train-the-trainer sessions. Appendix 1 is the questionnaire (developed by AMI) which covers the presentation by Bob Bevard, the contracted trainer, for the first day and one-half of the session. The last segments were measured by the evaluation in Appendix 2.

Provisions have not been made to collect surveys from participants at the field stations. We could send prototypes and ask that they be used and that summary information be sent to the PBI team.

Evaluation Questions	Measurement Tool	Measures	Time
How satisfied were the trainees with the course material?	Course reaction survey	Participant satisfaction	At end of course
How satisfied were the trainees with the instructor?			
Did participants agree that the program met their needs and state that they would recommend it to others?			

Learning.

There should be a measurable learning gain from training. Learning gain can be measured through the distribution of learning inventories or tests that are administered at the end or shortly after the conclusion of the learning activity. In the training, participants were given a pre-training and post-training questionnaire which covered the basic skills in performance based interviewing. However, these questionnaires were used for participant' self-assessment. They were not collected. In the fourth session of training we could collect the questionnaires.

There are, however, two potential concerns that should be considered. First, a more rigorous assessment to insure that learning did indeed take place would include implementing an experimental design. If training did take place, then the test scores of participants exposed to the training should be higher than those of a matched control group who did not receive training. We could use a paper and pencil test on skills as pre-test and posttest for participants and match them with managers in a VISN not in Phase I as a control group. (If we can find a group which is matched on other characteristics). A more direct measure of performance based interviewing skills would be to evaluate actual or videotaped interviews by participants and a control group. Second, even if learning did take place, that is no guarantee that the new found knowledge will be translated into local training or increased performance on the job. My recommendation would be to focus on behavior changes and results rather than measuring learning. Learning could be combined with the assessment of behavior changes.

Evaluation Questions	Measurement Tool	Measures	Time
Did trainees gain knowledge?	Questionnaire	Participant	Shortly
Did trainees attitudes toward interviewing change as a result of training?	or telephone survey	self-report of change	after course
Are there any important characteristics of trainees related to what they learned?			

Behavior Change.

This is the level where most decision-makers and managers are going to be focused. In their minds, any training program that is effective should result in some behavior change back on the job. If not, why do it? In other words, employee behavior on the job should change for the better. Sometimes this does not happen due to a lack of skill or motivation on the part of the trainee or the trainee returns to an environment that is not conducive to the trainee using the new skills. In designing the PBI program, the team has tried to develop sample questions, PowerPoint slides, a web site and other job aids for mangers. In addition, the project has received top-level support from Dr. Garthwaite. However, PBI involves a commitment of time and effort from the manager.

In order to determine if training has occurred, we will need to follow-up with the coordinators in the VISNs and the participants in the train-the-trainer sessions. To determine if the program's activities were implemented as planned, we will need to know if training occurred at facilities and who was trained. In addition to the list of managers who participated in the train-the-trainer sessions, we will need a list of participants in the facility training. We could ask that network coordinators follow-up with participants 3-6 months after the program to find out if they are using the PBI skills. Follow-up may be either a patterned interview by telephone (see draft in appendix 3 for participants in the train-the-trainer session) or by questionnaire.

Evaluation Questions	Measurement Tool	Measures	Time
Are participants in the train-the-trainer sessions training others on what they've learned?	Telephone calls or e-mail.	No. of employees trained and no. of training sessions.	3-6 months after training
Are trainees applying what they've learned on the job? What critical factors promote the use of knowledge and skills on the job?	Questionnaire or telephone survey	Participant self-report of behavior	3-6 months after training

Results.

Results measure cost-related and/or long-term outcomes or impact for the organization. Results may include measures such as increase in customer satisfaction; increase in quality of units produced, lower turnover, higher productivity, less absenteeism, higher morale, and reduced costs. Results measures are usually captured before and after the training to determine if the training had an impact.

Ultimately, we would hypothesize that PBI leads to better selections at the test VISNs and therefore better, more efficient, and less costly service to veterans. Unfortunately, the quantification of productivity changes to the VISN based on PBI training will be difficult and tenuous at best. This is due to the possible effects of other unmeasured variables. For example, all the supervisors in the VISN complete an intensive course in performance based interviewing and the days of bed care goes down as a result of better selections. However, in this example, an unmeasured variable may be the fact that the VISN implemented 360 feedback for all employees. It would be inappropriate to attribute the fewer days of bed care cost savings to the training program. In order to control for these effects a control group is sometimes included in the study. But control groups can pose problems since they may differ in significant ways from the experimental group. In addition, we cannot assume that a control group does not contain individuals who have

used PBI, since there are several champions of PBI who are not at the test sites. Despite the dangers of the quasi-experimental design, the hypothesis that PBI has affected productivity and customer service in the test VISNs is worth testing

Some of the measures will require tracking selections for a year or more. We will be able to obtain more immediate feedback on participant's perception of whether or not the training has improved selections. (See an example in Appendix 4). We can also examine the perceptions of employees who have been interviewed under merit promotion. (See an example in Appendix 5). We may want to focus on merit promotion applicants since we would need OMB approval of a questionnaire for outside applicants. Another option would be to focus on appointees and compare job satisfaction as well as perceptions of the interview for individuals appointed for a six month period before the training with individuals appointed in the six months after the training.

In order to measure the impact of PBI training on organizational measures; we would compare a six-month period nine months before the training with a six-month period nine months after the training. The following measures, depending on availability, would be examined to determine if there were statistically significant decreases: number of grievances; usage of sick leave, annual leave, leave without pay (LWOP), and absence without leave (AWOL); Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests; and turnover measures, especially length of service of leavers. We can also pull records of new hires for a six-month period nine months before and after training. The new hires could be tracked and comparisons made about the attrition rate, performance appraisals, and promotions. If significant differences are found on these measures, then the costs of hiring and absences can be measured and a cost benefit or return on investment model could be utilized.

At a more global level, we can also examine measures for the test VISNs from the VHA Office of Performance Management to determine if there have been improvements since PBI training. As mentioned above, there are several threats to the internal validity of this design strategy (i.e., changes could be due to factors other than PBI training). However, it would be worthwhile to at least see if there are significant improvements or if test sites have greater improvements than other VISNs.

Evaluation Questions	Measurement Tool	Measures	Time
Do training participants perceive a positive change in selection outcomes?	Questionnaire or telephone survey.	Supervisor's satisfaction.	3-6 months after training.
Do employees interviewed feel a greater satisfaction with the interview process?	Questionnaire or telephone survey. Exit interview, if necessary.	Employee satisfaction.	1-3 months after interview.
Have better selections been made as a result of implementing PBI?	Questionnaire for supervisors of the new hire.	Supervisor's satisfaction.	6-9 months after training.
Have selections had an impact on organizational measures?	Automated human resources system and other systems of records.	Measures taken before and after training compared to a VISN control group:	6-12 months after training.

Appendix 1

SEMINAR EVALUATION FORM
More Than a Gut Feeling II

Please circle the number that best describes your evaluation of the training program and return.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
This training program concentrates on practical issues of the selection process.	5	4	3	2	1
This training program should help me interview more effectively.	5	4	3	2	1
As a result of this program, I am more confident in my ability to choose the right person.	5	4	3	2	1
The objectives of the program were clearly presented.	5	4	3	2	1
Opportunities to ask questions and discuss issues were sufficient.	5	4	3	2	1
The session was well organized.	5	4	3	2	1

The best part of this program was:

This program could be improved by:

Additional comments

I would recommend this session to others. (Circle one)

Yes

No

Appendix 2

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting your needs and interests, we need your input. Please give us your reactions, and make any comments or suggestions that will help us to plan future training.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the principles of performance-based interviewing.					
I can explain performance-based interviewing to others.	1	2	3	4	5
I have the materials I will need to conduct training at my facility.	1	2	3	4	5
I have clear goals and an action plan for implementing performance-based interviewing at my facility.	1	2	3	4	5
I have an understanding of my role as a champion.	1	2	3	4	5

What suggestions do you have for making the program more helpful?

Are there areas where further training would be helpful?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire or Patterned Interview with Training Participants

All responses will be kept confidential. The answers will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the course so that improvements can be made in the future. We are particularly interested in determining if the performance based interviewing is being applied on the job. If it is not being used, we will want to know the reasons for its not being used and what other actions we need to take to support its use.

1. What specific behaviors were you taught and encouraged to use?
2. When you left the training, how anxious were you to apply performance based interviewing?
3. Did you feel well equipped to do what was suggested in the training?
4. Are there areas where you felt further training is necessary?
5. Have you used performance based interviewing on the job?
6. If you have used performance based interviewing, how effective was it in selecting high quality candidates? Very effective, somewhat effective, not effective.
7. If you are not applying performance-based interviewing, why not?
Are the following factors very significant, somewhat significant or not at all significant?
 - a. We have not been hiring.
 - b. It wasn't practical for my situation.
 - c. I haven't found the time
 - d. My boss discourages it
 - e. Other reasons.
8. Have you used any of the other resources at your station?
 - a. Have you contacted your trainer or anyone in HR?
 - b. Have you accessed the questions on the web site?
 - c. Have you reviewed the videotape "More Than a Gut Feeling?"
9. Do you plan to use performance based interviewing in the future?
10. What suggestions do you have for making the program more helpful?

Appendix 4
Performance Based Interviewing Questionnaire for Managers

This survey is designed to describe your experiences in conducting interviews since completing the performance based interviewing course.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. As a result of Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) training, I now conduct better interviews.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Candidates I have selected are more productive.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Candidates that I have selected needed less training after starting on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Training helped me to build rapport with the candidate.					
5. As a result of training, I was better able to probe for behavioral examples.	1	2	3	4	5
6. After taking the training, I seek contrary evidence to the impressions I have formed about applicants.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Training prepared me to handle awkward moments of silence.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I was able to avoid questions that I should not ask.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 4, Continued

9. Which aspects of the interviewing process are still the most difficult for you? Check your response(s).

- ☐ Identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform in the job being filled.
- ☐ Writing questions.
- ☐ Getting the candidate to supply behavioral examples.
- ☐ Conducting the interview.
- ☐ Documenting the interview.
- ☐ Rating the candidates.

	Low		Medium		High
	1	2	3	4	5

10. To what degree have you been successful in selecting good employees since attending the course?

11. What other comments would you like to make on conducting performance based interviewing?

Appendix 5
Performance Based Interviewing Questionnaire for Employees

Instructions: The manager who recently conducted an interview with you recently completed a course on performance based interviewing. In order to better understand the effectiveness of this course, we are interested in your reactions to this interview.

1. During the interview, what percentage of time did you spend talking? _____%

	Not At All		To Some Extent		To A Great Extent
2. To what degree were you asked to provide examples of your work experience?	1	2	3	4	5
3. To what degree were you given an opportunity to think about examples?	1	2	3	4	5
4. To what degree were you given an opportunity to provide information to the manager(s) to help them make a decision?	1	2	3	4	5
5. To what degree did the manager(s) answer your questions?	1	2	3	4	5
6. How satisfied were you with the interview?	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any comments you would like to provide about the interviews?